

SONGS OF JAPAN.

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY ARTHUR LLOYD.

POEMS BY PAST EMPERORS.

A Prosperous Country.

[This is the poem to which the present emperor alludes in his second poem "Prosperity," *Open Court*, Sept., 1911, p. 532.]

From the high roof of my imperial hall
I gaze upon the city, and behold
The rising smoke from many a lowly cot,
And know that all is well within the land.

Nintoku.

Birth 290, accession 313, death 399.

Pity for the Poor.

The thatch upon the cottage is so thin
That the rain penetrates it, drop by drop,
And as he works at indoor winter tasks,
The farmer's hand is wet.

Tenchi.

Birth 626, accession 662, death 671.

The Vanity of Human Life.

[The Emperor Shujaku may be taken as an illustration of the bad custom which prevailed during the Dark Ages of forcing the emperors to abdicate at an early age so as to prevent their acquiring any real power in the state, which was thus left at the mercy of the ambitious Fujiwara family. The Buddhist clergy of the time, for purposes of their own, aided and abetted the Fujiwara in their treacherous policy.]

How profitless a thing is this same self,
That I should think of it!

A few more months,
And, lo! 'tis scattered to the winds that blow,
And all resolved into nothingness.

Shujaku.

Birth 923, accession 931, abdication 946, death 952.

Pity for the Poor.

[Go-toba was one of the weak emperors of the Middle Ages, a mere puppet in the hands of the ambitious nobles and priests. He must have been very happy to be relieved from the cares of state.]

The night is cold, the mournful sighing wind
Howls through the chamber door. And then I know
How great must be the sufferings of the poor.

Go-toba.

Birth 1179, accession 1184, abdication 1198, death 1239.

There is Safety in Retirement.

The towering peak catches the rising sun,
And all men see it: but the dried up stick,
Hidden beneath the brushwork in the glen,
Escapes the ken of man.

Go-toba.

The Ideal of a Sovereign.

[During the whole of his reign Godaigo was troubled by the usurping rival dynasty of the North, which, commencing in A. D. 1313, did not end until 1392.]

My people's peace, the welfare of my land,
What an unending theme for thought is here!

Godaigo.

Birth 1287, accession 1319, death 1338.

Social Equality.

The whole world is but Buddha. Then to draw
Invidious bars and lines 'twixt high and low,
'Twixt rich and poor, how great a sin were this.

Kwanzan-Iu.

The Three Religions

[The restoration which was being prepared during Kōkaku's life, if not his reign, was mainly the work of Shintoists, aided by Confucianists. The

Confucianists were constant supporters of the Shōgunate, and consequently never in favor with the imperial court in the 19th century.]

Shinto.

The winds of heaven dispel the lowering clouds
From the blue sky, and lo! the glorious moon
Shines with an undimmed luster o'er the earth.

Confucianism.

A truly glorious faith. But all its charm
Comes from our nation's garb wherein 'tis dressed.

Buddhism.

A creed of emptiness, a lotus-plant
In autumn-time, when flower and fruit are nought.

Kōkaku.

Birth, 1780, Accession 1816, Death 1840.

Dislike for Foreigners.

[Emperor Komei was the father of the present ruler. He was a consistent opponent of the policy of allowing foreigners to enter Japan, and it was not until the accession of his son in 1867 that a more progressive policy became possible.]

Perish my body 'neath the cold, clear, wave
Of some dark well; but let no foreign foot
Pollute the earth around me with its tread.

Kōmei.

Birth 1831, accession 1847, death 1867.

POEMS BY MEN OF ACTION.

Images of Life.

[Sanetomo was the third and last of the Minamoto line of Shoguns at Kamakura.]

a The cold spring wind is fragrant with the scent
Of the first flowering plum, and as it blows,
The fragrance lingers in my garment's folds.

b The world's a dream, a cherry flower that blows,
And sheds its petal-snow and is no more.

c Spring verges on to summer, and the bloom
That pleased my eye in April is no more.

d At midnight, when the glistering drop of dew
Shines on the lotus-petal, thou mayest see
The moon's bright face reflected wholly there.

Minamoto Sanetomo.

1192-1219.

Practical Religion.

Better a man should wrestle with his sins
Then build a temple to the holy gods.

Minamoto Sanetomo.

A Layman's View.

These priests, they labor not to save men's souls,
They only preach to fill their money bags.

Anon.

A Want of Common Sense.

[A celebrated patriot and loyalist, Masashige fought for the emperor Go-daigo (see above) against his usurping rivals. He has been a very popular hero in Japan ever since the restoration.]

"Deep water and thin ice,"—the man that sees
This notice by the frozen lake, and still
Ventures upon the ice, call him a fool.

Kusunski Masashige.

1294-1336.

Depth of Character.

[The chief claim of Ota Dōkwan to renown to-day is that he built the Castle of Yedo, which is now the imperial palace at Tokyo.]

Deep-channeled streams sweep silent to the sea,
But shallow brooks go babbling o'er the stones.

Ota Dōkwan.

1432-1486.

The Thought of Death.

How sad it is to leave one's life just now!
Yet, when I think of it, this life is nought,
And leaving nought behind me can't be sad.

Ota Dōkwan.

That Which Changes Not.

[A well-known figure in the history of the Civil Wars, Takeda is always looked upon by the Japanese as a paragon of knightly virtues.]

We watch the changing phases of the moon
 From crescent back to crescent. Thus the world
 Fixes its gaze upon the transient show
 And change of this material world of ours,
 Nor heeds the unchanging Truth that dwells beneath.

Takeda Shingen

1521-1573.

Death in Exile.

To die an exile in a far-off land
 Is no such great misfortune, so it be
 Faith or my country's weal that sent me there.

Zoshi.

The Vanity of Life.

[Toyotomi Hideyoshi, generally known as Taikō Sama, was without doubt the greatest man that Japan has ever produced, a warrior, a statesman and a man of intellect. He was no lover of the corrupt Buddhist priesthood of his time.]

Life's but a dew that sparkles on the leaf
 And sparkling melts, and all my mighty deeds
 In camp and castle but as images
 Reflected in the dewdrop, dreams that pass,
 With him that dreamed them, into nothingness.

Hideyoshi.

1538-1598.

Worthless Priests.

In stole and scarf the counterfeiting priests
 Of this decadent age go round the streets,
 Deceiving men with outward pomp and pride.
 But, see, the fox peeps out, for all their clothes.

Hideyoshi.

Light in Darkness.

[Date Masamune, *daimyō* of Sendai, was at one time a great patron of the Catholics. He sent an embassy to Rome and Madrid, and was even very

much inclined to embrace Christianity. The fear of the Shōgun kept him from this step, and he finally became a persecutor of the Christians. It is possible that this poem was written by him in his pro-Christian days.]

The world is dark, yet can I see to walk,
The silver moon illumining my path.

Date Masamune.

1566-1636.

To-Morrow's Hopes.

O fool! that, with misguided confidence,
Bragg'st of to-morrow and to-morrow's hopes!
To-morrow's hopes? What are they but refrains
Still trembling in the air from yesternight?
—And yesternight has gone.

Minamoto Ietaka.

The Whispers of Conscience.

"Thou has a devil," says my friend to me:
And I, indignantly, give him the lie.
But when my conscience whispers me and says,
"Thou hast a devil," what can I reply?

Abe Suruga no Kami.